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Analytical Parallel and Criticism
ON THE PRINCIPAL
UNION AND REBEL GENERALS
WHO HAVE HELD
COMMANDS-IN-CHIEF OF ARMIES.*

THE recent editorial in the JOURNAL, entitled "Military Talent in the War," from the hasty glance which its brief space compelled it to give to the prominent soldiers between whom it instituted comparisons, suggests some points upon the same subject which deserve more careful elaboration. That article, of course, was confined to points of *similarity* between the individuals selected for comparison; but it is evident there are points of *discrepancy*, which might be educed between the same individuals, and which must be presented, in anything pretending to be an analysis of the characteristics of the Northern and Southern Generals. For example:

With all due deference to the experience of the author of that article, we would submit the following criticisms upon it, as questions to be decided by the judgments of reflecting readers. Is the comparison or parallel between LEE and GRANT borne out by their records? The former would appear to be as *cautious* as the latter is *incautious*, i. e., headlong, bold; the former as tenacious, in the offensive-defensive sense of *pertinax*, as the latter is pertinacious in the pure aggressive. LEE may be compared to the Arch-Duke CHARLES, of whom we have the following testimony from his opponent NAPOLEON BONAPARTE: "Prince CHARLES is a man whose conduct can never attract blame." GRANT on the other hand presents a combination of the peculiarities of SUWARROW, BLUCHER, PELISSIER, and kindred spirits, whose indomitable perseverance, whose Forwards! Forwards! fed the fire of resistance with fresh columns of headlong attack, until its violence was quenched in blood and extinguished beneath the feet of chafing life: witness the Spring campaign of 1864.† Had GRANT lived at an earlier date, he might have been assigned to that class of Commanders-in-Chief—ATTILA, GENGHIS-KHAN, TAMOUR-LANE,‡ and other Eastern conquerors—who expedited massive columns, with resistless fury, upon awaiting entrenchments, squares and lines, and overran or overwhelmed nations;—dismissing tens of thousands to the onset, with a suggestive and imperative motion of command; leaving to subordinate ability and vigor, courage and discipline, to meet and provide against the details of accomplishment: somewhat as NAPOLEON by a wave of the arm hurled

forward an important attack at *Eylau*, or *SUWARROW*, by a laconic order, indicated the onsets and manœuvres of *Novi*, 1799:—"KRAY and BELLEGARDE will attack the left, the Russians the centre, MELAS the right!" "God wills, the Emperor orders, SUWARROW commands that to-morrow the enemy be conquered."

Taking NAPOLEON at his own estimate of himself, as expressed in his own analysis of his own tactics, many admirers of GRANT would not be willing to accept a comparison to him as a compliment. "It is always the most obstinate general, and the one who can stand a larger expenditure or more profuse waste of men who gains a battle." (MONTGALLIARD viii, 203). What a contrast does this confession present to the principle of TURENNE, "to economize the blood of the soldier?" This last was likewise VAUBAN's cherished sentiment; lavish brain work, economize life! and what is the result? TURENNE, according to NAPOLEON's own admission, was the *only* General who grew greater and greater by experience as long as he lived, greatest, most admired, honored by friend and opponent, universally lamented when he fell. The same as regards VAUBAN. Whereas NAPOLEON was never so great as at his rising. In the earlier stages of his career he triumphed by address, afterwards by numbers; at first by consummate skill, at last by profuse waste of blood and overpowering force, annealed into mass by iron discipline. The Nomades of Asia have produced Napoleons; witness ATTILA, GENGHIS-KHAN, TAMOURLANE; yes, the barbarian races of Africa, for example, XINGHA-BANDI, MOSELEKATSE, whom MOFFAT in his *South Africa* styles "the Napoleon of the Desert." Where, on the other hand, have such men as GUSTAVUS, TURENNE, VAUBAN, COHORN, WASHINGTON, WELLINGTON, arisen but in the bosom of the highest, i. e., purest phase of civilization. To this latter class we must hope that SHERMAN belongs, whose iron will is subordinate to mature judgment.

The French author of the "*Battle of Mont St. Jean*," says that "BONAPARTE now contemplated with a look of ferocity the hideous spectacle of so frightful a butchery. The more the obstacles to his success multiplied, the more obstinate he became. He was indignant at these unforeseen difficulties, and far from hesitating to expose and to annihilate an army whose confidence in him knew no bounds, he ceased not to send forward fresh troops, and to order them to charge with the bayonet, and to carry everything before them. He was often told that at various points the affair was against him, and that his troops began to waver, "FORWARD! FORWARD!" was his *only* reply.

A General sent to inform him that he found himself in a position which he could not maintain, owing to the dreadful fire of a battery, and to ask what he should do. "*Let him carry the battery*," was the reply, and NAPOLEON abruptly turned his back on the Aide-de-Camp.

As regards *character*, or extreme *manliness*, or *magnanimity of views*, GRANT will always rank A 1; and equally as a commander of men, A 1; but as a consummate or finished General, as a military genius, have his antecedents shown that he can claim a higher grade than several others who have manifested themselves during this rebellion?

GRANT and his policy recall PHILIP II and his adage, "Time and I against any other two." Were not the movements to flank LEE, in the spring of 1864, a repetition of HOOKER's idea of the preceding year, more successful because carried out with the superior prestige and power, moral and material, possessed by a generally popular, a successful, and a trusted supreme chief.

It is very disagreeable to cite rebels in respect to ability, but A. SIDNEY JOHNSTON, of Utah notoriety, who fell at *Shiloh* or Pittsburg Landing, promised a great future, as did also our SMITH, who died about the same time, REYNOLDS, the hero and victim of Gettysburg. STONEWALL JACKSON captivated the fancy, but he was not a *great* General, properly speaking, although his death was Providential for us, since his life fired the Southern heart. His fall was almost a compensation for the failure of Chancellorsville. In many respects STONEWALL JACKSON and GRANT are not so very dissimilar. Just analyze both characters and decide if this remark is any disparagement of our Lieutenant-General.

THOMAS, victor of the great battle at Nashville, is a solid character, grand in its solidity. He reminds a military reader of the spotless MACDONALD, not brilliant but always reliable, whether charging through the "*tourmente*" churm of the Splugen, or the chaos and crash of the Austrian batteries at Wagram, a spectacle worthy of consideration, either when ordering his drums to beat the charge in order to encourage his men to dare confront the Avalanches of the Lepontian (Grison) Alps in 1800, or when ordering his own conduct as an example where his column had to triumph or die, on the plain of the Marchfeld, in 1809.

"O, paint the hero, who from rank to rank
Impetuous flies, 'mid death's career, at which
Bellona even stands appall'd, to stem
The current of the Rebel arms, and rear
The impenetrable rock of granite firm
In stately mass of immobility.
Describe the brazen thundering cannon's mouth,
Discharging flames of vivid fire around."

LEE is rather a FABIVS than a MARCELLVS, or perhaps a union of the best qualities of both, showing different phases of energy, as a revolving light flashes forth different colors of brilliancy as it slowly makes its revolutions before watching eyes, amid the tempest. GRANT has little or nothing of the *delaying* talent of FABIVS CUNCTATOR, except perseverance, a quality which was not confined to the Roman Dictator.

To pass on to the next couplet of the editorial parallel in question. Do JOE JOHNSTON and McCLELLAN resemble each other in the attributes which distinguish them? The former was by no means a popular commander while *in actual command*, whereas the latter, like the noted MARQUIS OF GRANBY, was particularly so. JOE JOHNSTON was a quick, skillful, and hard bitter, eminently cognizant of the value of time, of place, and of circumstance,—witness his opportune appearance, to our discomfiture, at the first Bull Run: McCLELLAN was sadly deficient in a due appreciation of all of these three, and particularly in the combination of the whole three. That "Time is a hard horse to beat," he especially ignored. He reminds a person of ATHEL-

STAN, "*the Unready*," in his tardiness, being always behind the time, however wise the intent and plan; while he does not recall the Saxon prince in his willingness to adventure his cloth cap and jerkin against the steel head piece and armor of the Templar. McCLELLAN always demanded very great and favorable odds, JOE JOHNSTON was willing to supply odds by augmented vigor.

In fine, JOE JOHNSTON resembles the *Great* FREDERICK at the epoch of the Second Silesian war; McCLELLAN the Prince CHARLES of Lorraine of that era. Opposed to the Prince, when manipulated and directed by old Marshal TRAUN (to whom FREDERICK admitted he "went to school," a general very much of the same stamp as our SHERMAN). FREDERICK, driven back slowly but surely in the same manner as JOE JOHNSTON in the Atlanta campaign or retreat, lost prestige and vantage; against a PRINCE CHARLES alone, the Confederate chief acquired glory and achieved victory as in the Virginian Peninsular.

The third parallel is HOOKER and HOOD. Is there any similitude between these, except that both are bold and enterprising commanders? In genius HOOKER¶ towers above HOOD as far as one general, i. e., a manœuvring or expert general, can tower above another. The plan of Chancellorsville was a master conception. It yet remains to be explained why it failed. "Sooner or later," says MONTESQUIEU, "all will be made known." To HOOKER, as a general, may be applied in another sense the idea that he is "monarch of all he surveys." His *coup d'oeil* is magnificent. His plan of operations in regard to battle, which occurred at Gettysburg, was excellent, and if carried out as he intended, would have ground LEE to pieces between an upper and nether millstone. His military calibre may be best explained by a comparison: *He cannot play chess* BLINDFOLD. Any battle-field within the scope of vision, he is capable of governing, but the question is, can he, by telegraph or orders, direct vast and difficult combinations beyond the range of vision. LOOKOUT is a triumph, glorious enough for a general to repose upon. Admirably planned, it was executed as boldly. HOOD, on the other hand, is simply a bold and reckless fighter. If it is not considered a reflection, and no offence or depreciation is intended our Lieutenant-General, the parallel between HOOD's and GRANT's tactics is closer than many would like to avow were the touchstone of analytical criticism applied, *ceteris paribus*, to both.

As to SHERMAN, there can be no disagreement. He is a great general, the greatest this war has produced, the greatest, taking the word general in its true signification, this country has ever been blessed with. Like all transcendent generals, he is as able with his tongue and his pen, as he is as a military leader, as an administrator, as a master of logistics, strategy and tactics. *The world acknowledges this* But the glory is to have perceived it when the world did not comprehend it, at the outset of his career, when the wiseacres at the metropolis of mediocrity pronounced him "crazy." Their verdict reminds us of the judgment passed on the immortal WOLFE, whose selection to command the expedition destined against Quebec, induced the representation to Prime Minister PITT that he (WOLFE) was mad. The great statesman's reply is variously reported, but the

sense of all his answers is the same. "If he is mad, I wish he would bite all the rest of the army," or "I wish there were hundreds more of just such mad-men in the British army."

Finally, the British military critics couple the name of another general with, although subordinate to, that of SHERMAN—ROSECRANS.** He has shown that he possesses the attributes of a great strategist. Jealousy, or some other equally potent cause, has enveloped his glory with the mists of prejudice. But his campaign from Nashville to Chattanooga can never be forgotten by true military observation. His ability will yet emerge from the cloud which invests it, and its brilliancy be acknowledged by an appreciating people.

SHERMAN is the American FREDERIC the Great (NAPOLEON, if the word imply more), HANNIBAL, and SERTORIUS ("the greatest general," says the "tactician," "prophet," VON BULOW, "of antiquity"—the greatest general for mountain warfare, it is admitted, that the world has ever seen), the hero of the war, the solver of the problem, and the cynosure of military admiration. The North can never be sufficiently grateful for him; for, as DECKER truly says, "a great captain is the chiefest gift of Providence to a nation."

"Dieu des combats, sois-lui toujours fidele !
Dieu de la paix, couronne ce guerrier !
A son genie appartient l'immortelle,
A sa valeur appartient le laurier."

O God of battles, shield him with thy power !
O God of peace, his warrior temples crown !
Due to his genius the "immortal" flower,
The laurel has his valor made his own.

There has been no combined seriatim manoeuvring, properly speaking, in this war, except by ROSECRANS and SHERMAN.

J. WATTS DE PEYSTER.

FEBRUARY 12, 1865.

NOTES.

* The following remarks are printed *verbatim*, as written in order that it may not be charged that they were made subsequent to operations, which might have occasioned changes of opinion in regard to the generals cited, or have induced the writer to suppress or alter or color his criticisms in accordance with facts, circumstances, interest or the times. If they are just, let them stand as a proof of clear and honest judgment; if unjust, they will fall to the ground as errors, not intentional mistakes, but errors in judgment, dictated by no feeling against any one named on the loyal side.

† GRANT, according to the analysis of one of the best dis-sectors of character, GRANT is no strategist—as the term is generally used—but a THOR-striker, whose road to his object is corduroyed with dead men.

‡ BAJAZET, at Angora, Friday, 20th or 28th July, 1402, although at the head of 120,000 Osmons, placed his main reliance in his 30,000 janizaries, infantry, whom, con-

stituting his main centre, marshalled in a vast parallelogram, he commanded in person, on foot, in their midst.

TAMERLANE led 840,000 Mongols and auxiliaries, principally cavalry, whose charges, headed by his brave sons and grandsons, wore out the whole summer day without deciding the conflict. Finally, the lame Khan, having launched in vain 10,000 after 10,000 cuirassiers, as well as light armed horsemen against the Turks, signalled 50,000—some say 100,000 horse—his grand reserve and chosen column, to make a decisive effort. It was successful; and on a field strewn with hundreds of thousands of dead and wounded, the vast majority Tartars, TIMOUR received the tokens of victory, and welcomed to the shelter of his tents his illustrious captives, among them his rival and late haughty antagonist and his son MUSA, besides several emirs and officers of the highest distinction. (SAVAGE's Turkish History: New York Historical Society, 144-'6. LAMARTINE's *La Turquie*. VON KAUSLER's "Memorable Battles, Combats and Sieges,"—pp 145-'6, plate 1-3.

§ But we must pass over in silence the Spanish wars, and the times subsequent to them, or, at least, only speak of them to bring up the faults committed, and to prove that Fortune must have abandoned NAPOLEON the day he became unfaithful, in carrying on military operations, to the true principles of war, which hitherto he had respected. The accumulation of men and means were useless to date from those epochs of unhappy memory, and, with the exception of Lutzen and Bautzen, (to which the translator excepts again), we cannot recognize NAPOLEON in any of his campaigns. (MARMONT's "Military Institutions," 120.)

|| Had the writer read the Lieutenant-General's Report before this was published, he would have been more restricted in regard to the magnanimity, without adding a word as to the ability, of the Commander-in-Chief. GRANT should have been more considerate in regard to others, particularly ROSECRANS, whose laurels are laurels indeed, whereas the coronal which encircles his own brows should be composed not of laurels (or at best of laurels alone), but of asphodels.

¶ MARMONT, in his "Military Institutions," avers that, with 10,000 men a general *fight*s; that he should be in the midst of his troops, and often expose himself to the enemy's fire. [As general of division, especially at Williamsburgh—by many considered the bloodiest battle of the whole rebellion—HOOKER fulfilled these conditions.]

A general, continues the Duke of RAGUSA, *commands* 30,000 men, manoeuvres his troops and his reserves, and as a rule, with the exception of extraordinary cases, keeps out of musketry (*i.e.*, old-fashioned musketry fire at 100 yards) but is under artillery fire (cannon range in MARMONT's time scarcely exceeded that of rifled musketry at this epoch), and remains within range of round shot. [At Antietam and Look-Out, HOOKER again nobly performed his duty under this category of requirements.]

A general, concludes the French Marshal, *directs or supervises* 100,000 men. He draws up the plan, issues his orders before the battle, sets the ball in motion, and awaits the event in a central position. [This HOOKER did at Chancellorsville, and his strategical preparations cannot

well be found fault with.] During the action he becomes a sort of Providence, without the irresistible power to cause his orders, however indispensable to success, and even the safety of his troops, to be executed, he meets instantly unexpected contrarieties, and remedies greater accidents. [HOOKER, stricken down and senseless for hours, at the moment his generalship was most needed, could not enact this rôle.] He should expose himself before the battle to see everything for himself, and judge with precision of the real state of affairs. These duties performed, he gives his orders, and leaves to each subordinate those belonging to the part assigned to him. [HOOKER did this emphatically, and subordinates knocked his grand conception, by non-execution thereof, into pi.] If affairs go well, he has nothing more to do. If accidents occur he should avert or retrieve them as far as the means in his power will allow. If things are very bad, and a catastrophe is to be feared, he should put himself at the head of his last reserves, and head them against the enemy, and his presence at this moment of supreme importance gives them an impulse and a moral force which doubles their valor. [At Williamsburgh HOOKER's presence held his men up against fearful odds, and when they had to give ground they gathered around him as a centre and strong tower, to make their last desperate stand. Throughout the Peninsular campaign it was everywhere and always the same. At Bristow Station STONEWALL JACKSON encountered in "fighting Joe" a moral impulse and potential fighting power equal to his own, and was there first *driven*, as he had been wont to drive. At Antietam the same casualty kept HOOKER's intrepidity and genius from transmitting partial into complete success, and in the Georgia campaign, from Lookout to Peach-Tree Creek, HOOKER was the prominent figure in the triumph, splendid in the brilliancy of his effective execution.]

** Taking the word General (*strategos*) in its closest and highest sense, as regards strategical, administrative and supervisory abilities, ROSECRANS is certainly the commander who comes nearest to the exemplification of the Greek idea. The greatest general (*strategos*) of the American Revolution, either on the Colonial or Royal side, was GREENE. As a strategist and master of grand tactics, no other, not even WASHINGTON himself, could approach him.

ROSECRANS is the GREENE of this war; but even as GREENE had a thorn in his side—a link, very small, but still a link wanting—even so must it be with ROSECRANS, or else he would have stood forth as *the Man*, taking man in its broadest and grandest acceptation, the hero of this war. He had all the cool deliberation of GREENE—the active energy of WAYNE—and the intelligent pertinacity of SCHUYLER; but—and here the analysis of character finds itself baffled, even as in chemistry or any other science, the detection of some little remote cause of the highest importance, eludes the earnest investigation of the philosopher. ROSECRANS is one of those men whom a West Point education develops. He is a striking exception to that general rule, that the inevitable result of routine education is to choke free thought. Witness DAVIS and LINCOLN. ROSECRANS issued from West Point, not only a mere master of battalion tactics, but a chemist, architect, engineer,

miner, natural philosopher, competent to grapple with the fine exigencies of any scientific career, and develop himself into a practical application of what he had learned. That is to say, the germ of his education, grew through his reflection and experience into a plant whose magnitude was a proper sequel to its origin. In the military art and science he is not only a practical soldier, but an organizing originator. Witness the system of inspections, which, admirable as they are, were based on his original orders. He certainly possesses the most comprehensive intellect of any general the writer has encountered in society. Able to converse on military topics with a soldier, surveying with an engineer, mineralogy with a scientific miner, chemistry with an educated manufacturer of articles, whose productions and profits are based on that science, trade with a merchant of high standing and close observation. The list of his capabilities might be enlarged, but sufficient has been said to prove that a West Point education is of untold practical value even to a citizen, provided that citizen has the brain to receive, and comprehend, and apply the instruction.

But to return to ROSECRANS' military record, which alone is pertinent to this occasion. In Western Virginia his plans of operations, his manipulation of his troops, his comprehension of the capabilities and assignment of men, and his command are faultless, as far as he was permitted to act independently, and was not fettered by that injustice which from the first prevented the Louvois in the War Department from judging dispassionately of the merits of men, and, by blinding his judgment with his prejudices, prevented him from perceiving that he was sometimes sacrificing the interests of a great people, of humanity in gross, his own personal dislike of individuals, and his use of his power as a public officer, to gratify an inexplicable appetite for annoyance. Witness his answer(1) to ROSECRANS, when the latter applied to him for reinforcements, in July, 1863, "that he (STANTON) would be damned if he "would give him (ROSECRANS) another man." This drew forth the remark of General ROUSSEAU, that "he was satisfied that my (ROSECRANS') official destruction was but a "question of time and opportunity. The will to accomplish it existed, and that it was no use to hope for any "assistance from the War Department."

The same remarks apply as justly to ROSECRANS' whole subsequent career, for the same causes produced like results up to the moment he was relieved from command.

ANCHOR.

TIVOLI, December, 1865.

(1) Consult ROSECRANS' Testimony before the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War; Report 142, page 28, ROSECRANS' Campaign.